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ABSTRACT

Social and cognitive theories indicate that conflict plays an important role in an individual's psychological development. Research findings bearing on this conundrum provide initial hints about what social conflict in children is like and how it relates to characteristics of the child, but the short and long term positive and negative effects of social conflict on development remain unknown. A second conundrum concerns the fact that, while conflict is a dyadic relationship, it may not be studied as such. Studying children's natural social behavior in the past decade has shown how difficult it is to think "dyadically." To understand conflict, it could be very important to focus on the identity of the dyad. A third conundrum concerns whether or not the study of conflict can reveal the structure of the social environment to which the child adapts and can illuminate aspects of that environment as it adapts to the child. Most major theories of development do not address systematically the interaction of the developing child and the social environment. Over time and over many conflicts, messages are provided from the group to the child and from the child to the group concerning circumstances important enough to generate conflict. Analysis of conflict at the group level may reveal some major structures of information in the child's social environment. (RH)

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CONFLICTS AND CONUNDRUMS IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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We in developmental psychology are in a curious state of affairs. And that state of affairs becomes "curiouser and curiouser," to quote Alice in Wonderland, the longer it goes on. The puzzle is this: We in the field take our theories seriously, and yet, at the same time, we seem to ignore some of their central tenets when we select topics for empirical study. A case in point--and the focus of this address--is the concept of conflict. In virtually every major theory of human development, conflict is a central concept--those conflicts that are dynamic moments of coping or not coping, adapting or not adapting, progressing or regressing. Yet seldom is conflict to be found as a topic of direct empirical study--whether we judge topics by our most recent compendium of wisdom about development, the HANDBOOK OF CHILD PSYCHOLOGY, or by the developmental journals that cross our desks.

Today I would like to briefly consider the concept of conflict in developmental theories, and then etch out some of the major features and correlates of social conflict between children from the sparse and diverse data that are available.

In theories, the definition of conflict varies, sometimes taking a mild form based on "lack of fit" notions (e.g., "mismatch," "discrepancy," "dissonance") to stronger forms of more direct opposition (e.g., "incompatability," "contradiction"). What it is that is in conflict varies, of course, among the theories, some emphasizing intrapsychic conflict, some interpersonal conflict. Despite these differences, the major stage theories of development give conflict a major role in ontogenetic development. Piaget (1960/1947) posited assimilation and accommodation as mechanisms for dealing with the nonfittingness of existing structures to experienced reality. The lack of fit between current sensorimotor or mental schemas and the demands of objects and events is the essential conflict in his theory, the moments for fundamental growth and development. The classic conservation problem was Piaget's favorite example to illustrate the conflict between logic (what must be) and perception (what reality appears to be), as well as intrapsychic conflict between two logically incompatible beliefs. Social-cognitive development too, he posited is substantially enhanced by social conflict, especially conflict between children which he saw as essential for the reduction of egocentrism.

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So, too, theories of personality and social development such as Freud's and Erikson's have as a keystone the concept of conflict. For Freud (Hall, 1954) it was the frequent incompatabilities between one's drives and society's demands and rules, conflict that engenders anxiety and defenses against it. For Erikson, conflictual relations at three levels were emphasized: between the emerging personality of the child and the demands of parents (as representatives of society); conflicts within the individual which Erikson (1950) viewed as "crises" of psychosocial development, e.g., to trust others vs. not to trust others; and finally, conflicts between modes of adapting, e.g., "to hold on" vs. "to let go." Klaus Reigel's (1976) developmental theory is perhaps the one which most explicitly and centrally uses the concept of conflict in its dialectic model of human development across the lifespan. Ethological theory, too, implicitly recognizes the import of conflict, emphasizing its role in the emergence of social structures such as dominance hierarchies in groups. In these theories conflict is not only recognized as an inevitable experience of human existence, but conflict is seen as the dynamic moment of change and development.

Yet, for all this emphasis on conflict in theories, we find very little research in our field specifically addressed to it--its basic features and effects. Hardly having said that, I can imagine that one could argue, however, that we have studied conflict often and in diverse ways if we make the assumption that conflict has been the social context for some popular areas of study. Take, for example, children's aggressive behavior--studied often and for decades. It is probably true that when aggression occurs, it occurs because something is in dispute (see Parke & Slaby, 1983, pp. 568-573); it seldom occurs unprovoked, for no apparent reason. As such, when we've studied aggressive behavior we have been studying conflict indirectly in virtually all those cases. But conflict should not be equated with aggression. Interpersonal conflict is a state in which one child's goals are resisted by another child or adult. The behaviors that ensue may be persuading, threatening, cooperating, aggressing, etc. These behaviors can be viewed as tactics or strategies for achieving one's goal, i.e., to resolve the conflict in one's favor. As such, most aggression occurs in the context of conflict, but most conflict does not involve aggression. We will return to this point later.

Another example of the indirect study of conflict--moving from child-child relations to parent-child relations--is the large research literature on discipline strategies of parents. Here, the conflict is between parental wishes and goals and the child's behavior, and the parents' use of strategies to change the child's actions--asserting their power, withdrawing their love, reasoning, etc. (Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967), or the adopting of authoritarian or authoritative roles (Baumrind, 1971).

But these indirect studies of conflict can provide at best only a very shadowy picture of the form and role of conflict in children's lives. We need to study social conflict directly, examining its major features, and thereby eventually putting our theories to test on the fundamental import of conflict. One of the first tasks in this new area of study, as in most new areas, is "getting to know the phenomenon." This is a frankly descriptive task, recognizing that there are many variables correlated with the phenomenon in the natural world: It exists in "clouds of correlations," as Sandra Scarr (1984) described the study of natural phenomena in her Presidential address last year.

While such "clouds" keep us from making clear causal statements about the phenomenon, there are some benefits to the study of social conflict in natural settings that deserve noting at the outset. First, the individuals who are in actual conflict tell us what is important to them by the types of goals they pursue, by their resistance to particular goals and actions of others, and by their persistence in reaching their goals. They care enough to make an attempt to influence someone; they care enough to resist someone, to make an issue over something. Indeed, in a larger sense the types of conflict between children, and between children and parents, reflect the structure of the larger society. For example, by making an issue of taking another's possession, engaging in age-inappropriate or gender-inappropriate behavior, the society communicates what is important to it, its central values and goals. As such, when we study conflict we study events that are important to our subjects in their everyday lives, i.e., matters they themselves would not likely deem trivial, irrelevant, or exotic.

A second benefit of studying natural conflict--as a social context--is that it allows our examining how individuals structure their interactions, how their behavior is organized and related to goals. In the past, when we selected only one behavior to study, such as aggression, we lost any possibility of determining how it is related to other behaviors in the ongoing stream of behavior. It is within conflict episodes, I presume, that children learn and engage in many positive behaviors--persuading, negotiating, cooperating, sharing, etc.--as well as some occasional antisocial ones, and thereby learn some of the short-term and long-term benefits of their actions for their social relationships. This view of conflict is echoed in some social psychology treatises, such as Morton Deutsch's (1973): He argues at length with the common assumption (and the wrong assumption) that conflict is uniformly bad, destructive, and always to be avoided, detailing instead how conflict can and does serve progressive/constructive change as well as destructive change. In short, the study of conflict episodes as social contexts for many different

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behaviors, both negative and positive, provides an opportunity to examine directly the pattern and outcomes of children's social exchanges.

A third benefit, and one central to this address today, is the possible relation conflicts have to children's social-cognitive development. Because conflicts are social problems, they provide dynamic moments for the use of one's social-conceptual knowledge and reasoning to solve the problem. As I recently suggested,

> Most likely, social inferences...occur primarily in those situations in which the social environment in some way resists simple and habitual processes and acts. For example, simple expectations are not predictive, the situation is novel and old perceptions and routines cannot be applied, or known scripts fail to run off. What is...suggested here is the law of least mental effort applies until the environment provides circumstances where it fails, that is, it resists application." (Shantz, 1983, p. 543).

To begin to understand children's interpersonal conflict, we turn to the few studies focused directly on it as it naturally occurs in settings such as nursery schools, dyads in laboratory settings, and small groups of children at play. Some of this observational work was done fifty years ago, as in Helen Dawe's (1934) study of 200 quarrels of preschoolers, and some more recently in relation to sociometric status, social-cognitive development, and pragmatics. The framework for examining today this sparse conflict literature is to focus on the goals or issues of conflict, the behaviors or tactics that occur, and the outcomes of conflict, in short, a kind of "gross anatomy of conflict." Then we will turn to the relation of conflict to social-cognitive development.

Peer Conflict Research Studies

Issues of Conflict. At the outset of any conflict episode, Child A has a goal that is blocked or resisted by Child B. Some researchers use this as the definition of a state of conflict; other researchers require more--that child A persist in attempts to achieve the goal. Either way, the question is what is the goal that is resisted? What is the issue in this conflict? The largest percentage of conflicts during the toddler-preschool ages appears to involve the possession and use of objects (Dawe, 1934; Hay & Ross, 1982), usually the majority of all conflicts. The second largest category appears to be conflicts over another child's actions or lack of actions (for example, refusing to continue playing a game). A developmental trend appears: Issues of the control of the physical

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environment (objects and space) constitute a smaller proportion of conflicts as children grow older, and control of the social environment constitutes an increasingly larger proportion. The "social environment" includes not only actions and inactions, but conflicts over ideas and facts (i.e., debates), the latter constituting only a small proportion (usually less than 15%) of all conflicts among young children (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Houseman, 1972; Shantz & Shantz, 1982).

It bears noting that the identification of children's goals is not as straightforward as this summary may suggest. For example, goals may change within a single conflict episode; children may pursue two or more goals simultaneously (e.g., to get one's way at the same time to stay on friendly terms); and complex inferences often may be required to determine children's goals (see Renshaw & Asher, 1983).

Tactics/Strategies Used in Conflict. The next question is the kind of tactics children use to achieve their many different goals in conflict episodes. Let us focus on aggressive tactics in relation to other tactics: In what percentage of conflicts in natural settings does aggression (physical and/or verbal) occur once or more? In toddlers, it appears to be less than 25% of conflicts, as in Maudry and Nekula's (1939) study of 19- to 25-month-olds, and Hay and Ross's (1982) study of 21-month-olds. Krasnor and Rubin (1983) studied preschoolers' social problems, defined as attempts to achieve a specific goal such as beginning a conversation, getting help, or getting possession of a toy. These "problems" involved, then, both instances of resistance and nonresistance, and as such are a more general class of events than conflicts. The most frequent four strategies to solve social problems, they found, were to describe, give directions, show/point, and ask questions. In contrast, grabbing objects or hitting the other child accounted for only 5% of the 11 strategies coded. Shantz and Shantz's (1982) study of conflicts, specifically, between 6- and 7-year-olds in play groups revealed that half the strategies involved assertions, negations, expressive/nonverbal behavior, and ignoring the other child, whereas only 5% involved physical attacks on the other child, and 4% verbal attacks (derogation). These few studies indicate, then, that of all children's social problems and conflicts, physical or verbal aggression occurs in a very small percentage, and of all strategies, aggressive acts are at a low proportion or low frequencies. The low use of aggressive tactics reinforces the view that in the large majority of conflicts aggression does not occur between children. (Unfortunately, sometimes researchers [e.g., Dawe, 1934] report not the percentage of quarrels in which aggression occurs, but the percentage of children who quarrel who use aggression.)

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Beyond these molar categories, it is critical to understand how children structure their conflicts by the types of arguments, claims, and counterclaims they use. One exmple must suffice: Much and Shweder (1978) studied one type of conflict, the violation of rules as they naturally occurred in preschools and kindergartens, i.e., instances of accusation of rule breaking or spontaneous accounts of one's own behavior (as if the self recognized his/her own rule violation). They found that over 90% of accusations and accounts were about breaking three types of rules: regulations (school rules), conventions (cultural customs), and moral rules. Most importantly, children's strategies varied with the types of rule broken. For example, when school rules were violated children's arguments took a legalistic orientation, arguing situational circumstances and competing rules to explain their misdemeanor. But when moral rules were violated, the accounts focused on the actions themselves. Specifically--and, no doubt, familiar to parents--children tended to deny the act occurred at all, or they denied that they did it, or they attempted to redefine the act so it was no longer a moral issue. In the latter case, for example, Sandra accused Diane of "stealing" Sandra's chair. But Diane countered that because the chair was empty, she merely sat in it, she didn't steal it. One can hardly be blamed for sitting in an empty chair! These kinds of codings of the content of children's "moves" within conflict episodes reveal the subtleties of claims and counterclaims, and, as such, help us to keep our coding systems as sophisticated as the children we're studying.

Outcomes of conflicts. Given different goals that are resisted, and various tactics used in the conflict episode to achieve the goals, the last question in real time concerns the outcomes of conflict. Here I will summarize some of the general findings. (1) The majority of conflicts that preschoolers have are settled by the children themselves--one way or another, i.e., an adult does not intervene (Dawe, 1934; Sackin & Thelin, 1984). (2) Of those settled by children, the majority of conflicts appear to have quite clear win/loss outcomes, i.e., one child gives up his own goal and yields or complies with another's wishes (Dawe, 1934; Sackin & Thelin, 1984; Shantz & Shantz, 1982). (3) Dawe (1934) found that about 75% of quarrels were followed by little or no upset, and play was resumed. (4) For older children, some studies indicate that the effects of conflicts may last longer, and that adversaries are likely to go their separate ways for a while immediately after the conflict (Blurton-Jones, 1967; McGrew, 1972; Sackin & Thelin, 1984). (5) Some social goals, themselves, are successfully achieved more often than others. Krasnor and Rubin (1983) found that success was highest for getting another's attention, getting information, and starting a conversation, and were least successful when trying to stop another's ongoing activities or getting permission to begin a new activity. This pattern suggests that the degree of effort required by the other to

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comply is important in success rate. (6) Tactics, too, have different success rates across goals. In this case, the least often successful tactics appear to be sheer insistence on one's way, and the use of either physical or verbal aggression (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Shantz & Shantz, 1982). (7) Further, Krasnor and Rubin found that the successful problem solutions could not be predicted from tactics alone, but were predictable when tactics were considered in relation to specific goals.

Because of this latter finding, let us examine the role of tactics within one type of goal in a different body of literature: entering an ongoing group of peers at play. The problem is the transition from being an "outsider" to an "insider," which may be nonconflictual (the group immediately accepts the newcomer) or conflictual (they resist the child's entry). The findings of some studies of group entry have been briefly summarized recently by Kate Garvey (1984) in the form of "do's and don'ts" for successful entry. Her summary rules of the data are:

> The don'ts: Don't ask questions for information (if you can't tell what's going on, you shouldn't be bothering those who do); don't mention yourself or state your feelings about the group or its activity (they're not interested at the moment); don't disagree or criticize the proceedings (you have no right to do so since you are an outsider). The do's: Be sure you understand the group's frame of reference, or focus (are they playing house?); understand the participation structure of the activity; slip into the ongoing activity by making some relevant comment or begin to act in concert with the others as if you actually were a knowledgeable member of the group; hold off on making suggestions or attempting to redirect until you are well into the group. (pp.164-165)

From these "do's and don'ts" of group entry tactics one could infer that those which are most likely to be successful place minimal demands on the group to accommodate to the newcomer. These findings, along with studies of verbal conflicts between pairs of children (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981), suggest that (8) within goals, the more successful tactics are those that reflect sensitivity to the other's interests and needs, and adjustment to them so as to make compliance easy. And finally, (9) success has been related to a much more fluid aspect of each conflict episode--the roles of defender and intruder. Specifically, the defender (of a toy, of space, etc.) is more often successful than is the intruder/challenger (Camras, 1977; Shantz, 1977). As such even young children appear to abide by the dictum "Possession is nine-tenths of the law," almost. This then is the

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initial picture this small body of research offers on the major features of children's social problems and conflicts: the issues children get into disputes about, the tactics they use, and the outcomes of conflicts.

Conflicts and Social Cognition

We turn then to the second major question: Are any of these aspects of conflict--goals, tactics, outcomes--related to children's social-cognitive development? As suggested earlier, it would seem reasonable to suppose that children's social knowledge and social reasoning would most likely be used in actual situations where they face social resistance, i.e., in social conflict. The major data we have to support this notion are the analyses of what children say to each other in actual conflict, and the subsequent inferences the researchers make about what social knowledge children "must have" and what social reasoning they "must do" to account for their saying X or saying Y. While these data are valuable, our confidence is based entirely on the reasonableness or compellingness of the researchers' inferences. What is needed is some converging evidence, independently assessed, of social-cognitive competencies of children. Recently such data were gathered by David W. Shantz and myself--with the help of the National Science Foundation--on the relation between social-cognitive functioning and conflict behavior. The details of the study will not be given in this address because they are in a forthcoming book on cognitive and social conflict in the series NEW DIRECTIONS FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT, published by Jossey-Bass. I'll give only the main features and results here.

Methods

The first question in studying the relation between social-cognitive functioning and conflictual behavior is what aspects of social-cognition should be assessed. We chose to approach this issue by selecting domains of social knowledge and reasoning, domains which we intuited would be highly relevant to actual conflict behavior. The first domain was children's conceptions of persons: We reasoned that how children conceived of peers as persons would largely determine how they understood their adversary--any adversary--in an ongoing conflict, such as their proclivities to infer their adversary's goals, emotions, needs, i.e., internal, psychological needs of the other. The second domain relevant to conflict, we thought, was the child's social rule conceptions, rules being important because they are the larger regulatory social context of conflict. The third domain was more specifically related to conflict per se: children's knowledge of alternative ways to solve peer conflicts.

Children were interviewed on two occasions, and presented tasks such

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as describing known peers, judging rule violation stories, and generating strategies to solve hypothetical peer conflicts. The verbatim responses were coded, and then the codes were combined to form three developmental scales: for concepts of persons, concepts of rules, and concepts of conflict resolution strategies. Each scale had four levels going from least conceptually advanced to most conceptually advanced.

Briefly, I'll describe the developmental sequence in each as shown in Table 1. Person conceptions begin at Level 1 with the most superficial and general descriptions, based on the work of Peevers and Secord (1973) and Livesley and Bromley (1973), going through levels to the inferential and psychological concepts (Level 4) that differentiate the described person from other persons. Rule conceptions (Damon, 1977) at Level 1 capture children's views that breaking all rules is equally bad, e.g., convention violations (such as not combing your hair) are just as bad as moral violations (such as stealing). Level 4 rule conceptions are those where there is a clear distinction in the seriousness of breaking conventional vs. moral rules, and justifying such distinctions by focusing on the consequences of violations for the victim or on intrinsic moral principles. The conflict resolution strategies (Spivack & Shure, 1974) at Level 1 are the forceful, immediate ones of attacking another physically or verbally, grabbing wanted objects, etc., whereas Level 4 includes more socially indirect strategies that presumably require some "people reading" skills and delay of action.

Let us now turn to how conflict data were gathered. A total of 96 children from two suburban schools participated, randomly assigned (with some constraints) to one of eight groups that played for one hour after school for 10 consecutive weeks. The groups of 12 children represented four all-boy groups and four all-girl groups--created to mirror the same-sex groups children this age often spontaneously form; each group was composed half of first-graders and half second-graders. Each entire activity session of each group was videotaped in a free play area of their school library with two adults present but not directing their play.

Many different aspects of their conflicts were coded then from tapes, only a few of which are discussed here. First, conflict was defined as follows: Child A attempted to influence Child B, Child B then resisted, Child A then persisted in trying to influence B. At that point we coded that a state of conflict existed between the two, in order to have a dyadically defined conflict, one of mutual resistance. The videotape was then backed up to the initial event that began the conflict, and the following behaviors were coded for the entire conflictual episode: The goal or issue of the conflict, all the strategies each child used during the conflict, and the outcome of the conflict. More specifically, five issues/goals were

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coded. The two most frequent were the possession or use of objects and the behavior of the other--and these two will be the only ones discussed today. Of 38 coded behaviors occurring during conflict, four tactics will be presented here: Physical aggression--hitting, punching, etc.; verbal aggression--insulting remarks about another child or his/her products; commands--orders to do something, to stop doing it, etc.; and requests--asking another to do something or permission. The outcomes were coded for each child as wins, losses, stalemates, etc., but today we'll focus only on success (wins). Coding the 72 hours of videotape (Sessions 2-10) resulted in a data base of 1,645 conflicts. (See Appendix for illustrative conflicts.)

Results

The first question is whether one can predict any aspects of conflict (goals, tactics, outcome) from social-cognitive functioning as indexed by the set of six measures on developmental level and variance scores for persons, rules, and strategies. In addition, does age or gender relate to predicting aspects of conflict? We examined this issue by means of multiple regression analyses, entering first the set of social-cognitive measures, then age, then gender.

The major findings of this study, and the focus here today, are (1) children's social-conceptual level of functioning is related, and most strongly related, to two aspects of conflict--the issues (or goals) over which children fight and their success in achieving those goals, and (2) gender, apart from social-conceptual level, adds significantly to the predictability of the type of goals, the use of aggressive tactics, and the rate of conflict. The multiple regression analyses results are shown in Table 2.

Issues. The issue of the conflict was predictable from the set of social-cognitive measures, accounting for 17-18% of the variance for object disputes and person disputes. Age differences, albeit only a one-year difference in this study, did not add to predictability, but gender did, all variables accounting for 22% to 26% of the variance. As suggested by the multiple regression analyses, and confirmed by zero-order correlations, there was, however, only one social-cognitive measure of the six that was significantly related to issues: The level of person conceptions. The more advanced the child's person conceptions, the less often proportionally the child was involved in person control conflicts. It could be that advanced children's "insights" into other people make them aware of the difficulty of controlling others, and therefore they seldom--relatively speaking--get into behavior-control disputes. Another possibility--one we can't examine with these conflict data--is that children advanced in person concepts do try to control others' behavior often and are sufficiently

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skilled at it that their attempts are seldom resisted; i.e., they avoid getting into conflict. Gender, too, played an important role in predicting conflict issues, above and beyond social cognition: Girls' conflicts tended to be about person-control issues, and boys' were object-control ones. Whether these gender differences reflect more general differences in orientations toward people versus objects is a matter of speculation; while there is evidence of general orientation differences among children (e.g., Jennings, 1975), there are not sufficient data to know whether orientation differences are greater between genders or within genders.

Outcome. Let us turn to the success in achieving one's goals. Individual differences in proportion of conflicts won were substantially related to social-cognitive functioning. The set of social-cognitive measures accounted for 14% of the variance and neither age nor gender added to the explained variance. As such, there is support for the view that social-cognitive maturity is related to social competency, if we define such competency as solving social problems in one's favor (Krasnor & Rubin, 1983). Of all aspects of conflict, this relationship to success was the most expected in that conflicts, we thought, were times when children would be most likely to become consciously aware of a social problem and apply or use their social knowledge and reasoning to reach their goals. More advanced conceptions would then presumably increase the probability that the child would win the confrontation. It deserves noting that social-cognitive functioning may not be as highly related to achieving one's goals in general as it is to achieving one's goals in conflict. There are many times when goals can be reached in an automated, nonreflective way by direct action or a peer immediately submitting. Bullies, for example, may have a high success rate by virtue of other factors than advanced social reasoning.

Winning a higher proportion of one's conflicts was positively related according to the zero-order correlations to advanced rule conceptions and reasoning in this case, not person conceptions. Why rule conceptions are, apparently, more "potent" than person or strategy conceptions is unclear. It may be specific to the content. For example, children of this age tend to be quite rule-oriented, and those more advanced may use more often the "weight" of moral rule systems to defend and justify their wishes. Unfortunately, the coding system of this study cannot reveal how many object or person conflicts involved rule violations specifically, and thus how those are related to success.

Tactics. The tactics children used were much less related to their social-cognitive functioning than were the goals themselves or the degree of success. The two primary tactics that were related to social-cognitive functioning were verbal aggression and physical aggression, not commands or

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requests. Children with more advanced person and rule conceptions used less verbal aggression--perhaps because they understand the negative feelings it produces in the other child and empathically inhibit insulting tactics, or they view verbal aggression as counter-productive for changing a peer's behavior (a relationship borne out here: Winning and verbal aggression were negatively correlated, -.36). Another possibility--based on a more indirect relationship between cognition and tactics --is that children advanced in rule and person conceptions are less likely to be involved in person control conflicts, and those are the types of conflicts that tend to elicit verbal aggression. As such, tactics are more related to particular goals than directly to social-cognitive functioning. It bears noting that there is no evidence of a general "aggressive" tactic: Verbal aggression and physical aggression were unrelated (.03). Such a finding reinforces the notion that these two tactics function differently and should be coded separately, rather than using aggression as a general category of behavioral tactics.

Rate. Finally, the rate at which children became involved in disputes with peers was unrelated to any social-cognitive measure individually, or as a set. Conflict rate was related to age and gender: Boys and older children got in more disputes than did girls and younger children. Follow-up multiple regression analyses entering gender X age cross-products last (i.e., older boys, younger girls, etc.) did not, however, increase predictability of conflict rate. But, by way of a general summary of this study, when children are in conflict, it is their goals and success that relate to social-cognitive level.

Further, there are two points to be made about measuring social-cognitive functioning. First, this is the initial use of the developmental scales of person, rules, and strategies and as such they require more evidence to support their overall utility and reliability. Second, it is notable that the general conceptions of person and rules were most often related to conflict goals and success, not the specific conflict strategies. This is at odds with the dictum which some researchers seem to encourage: "The more specific the content of reasoning is to the behavior to be predicted, the closer the relationship to be found." Rather, these general conceptions are more predictive of some aspects of conflict than the highly specific strategy knowledge because, perhaps, the types of strategies may be based themselves on more general aspects of person and rule concepts. Such findings suggest that extensive theoretical and empirical work lies ahead to determine which domains (of innumerable relevant domains) reveal the elusive relations--direct and indirect--between social goals and behavior, and social-cognitive development.

Because we are at a very early point in research on social conflicts of children, it might be useful to pose some conundrums for future

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research. First, our theories of individuals' psychological development (both social and cognitive) indicate that conflict plays an important role in that development. Does it? We have no answer to that question yet, for it is a causal question. What we do have--what I have tried to briefly describe today--are some initial hints as to what social conflict between children looks like, and how it relates to certain characteristics of the child--to age, to gender, to social-cognitive development. These are descriptions and relationships only; the short-term and long-term positive and negative effects of social conflict on development are yet to be detailed. But even for descriptive purposes, it might be especially helpful to let our theories guide us. For example, we have seldom asked how children perceive and understand the events in which they participate or the events they actually witness, such as conflicts between peers. From Piaget's theory--a clearly constructivist theory in which meaning is often and importantly determined by the beholder--we might well ask how children themselves--of different ages--understand conflicts they get into and that they observe, what they think the outcomes are. To illustrate, Child A wants B to relinquish an object and B eventually does relinquish it; adult observers dutifully note, "A won, B lost." But Child A may construe the event to be a failure, not a success, because she or he was so hassled before getting the object; B may see handing over the object a success, not a failure, because A finally left B alone! And, further, even with clear success and failure patterns, Shaklee's work (1976; Shaklee & Tucker, 1979) would caution us not to overestimate children's ability to summarize and infer correctly. In short, the role conflict plays in social development may need to be sensitive to the ways in which participants in conflict give meaning and importance to such episodes.

The second conundrum is this: Conflict is a dyadic relationship, but will we study it that way? This last decade of studying children's natural social behavior--in attachment between infant and mother, in friendship relations between children, etc.--has shown us how difficult it is to think "dyadically." Perhaps it is our training in psychology--focused on individuals--and our statistical methods that encourage us to think about individuals, not twosomes. To think dyadically, we would not, for example, sum across adversaries of Child A. Each conflictual twosome would have its own identity: Child A with B, Child A with C, Child B with C, and so on. Hay and Ross (1982) asked a dyadic question in their study of toddlers: Can one best predict who starts a conflict by characteristics of the child, or by the history of each particular dyad? What they found was the dyad made a difference: The child who "lost" the conflict is much more likely to initiate the next conflict than was the member of the dyad who "won" (a finding not all that predictable from the effects of rewards and punishments). While individual characteristics were also predictive, it was the history of each particular dyad that also helped to predict their

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subsequent behavior. To understand conflict, we may well have to pay attention to the identity of the person with whom the child is in dispute, i.e., the identity of the dyad.

Finally, this address has been premised up to this point on the importance of conflict as it is embedded within theories of development. Yet these theories, themselves, focus on individual development, i.e., ontogenesis, and despite their richness, do not systematically address features of the social environment within which and in response to which the child develops. In short, most of the major theories either emphasize organismic development, or they emphasize the important role of the environment. They do not address in systematical detail the interaction of the developing child vis-a-vis the social environment. Thus, our theories provide only the haziest of notions as to the structure and content of the social environment. My third conundrum, then, is "Can the study of conflict reveal some of the major aspects or structure of the social environment to which the child adapts, and that environment as it adapts to the child?" What I am suggesting by this question is that the larger social group--be it neighborhood group of children, classroom, family--exposes the child through small conflicts and through major conflicts to some repeated messages about what is important, how things are to be done, its values and goals. As such, over time, over many conflicts, messages are provided to the child from the group and from the child to the group about what matters to this society--and matters to the individual--the things that are important enough to make an issue about. As such, conflict analysis at the group level may reveal some of the major informational structures of the social environment.

Thus, I leave you with some conundrums in children's social development. What is the role of conflict in social development? How do children conceive of their conflicts? How will dyadic analyses help us understand social conflict? Can research on conflict reveal the larger informational structure of the social environment of children? There are few answers, as yet, to these questions. They are, I would submit, aptly labeled "conundrums:" Questions for which there are only--and at best--conjectural answers!

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Table 1
Definitions of Developmental Levels of
Social-Cognitive Assessments

	Person Conceptions	Rule conceptions	Conflict Resolution Strategies
Level 1	Person described in terms of possessions, residence, family or appearance	Failure to consistently rate moral violations more serious than convention violations; and, justifies action as 'he wanted to do that' or justification	Forceful strategies: e.g., physical attack, grab object, push person, verbal attack, adult intervention
Level 2	Person conceived in terms of social relations often between describer and nominee, as liking, disliking, or friendship	Failure to consistently rate moral violations more serious; and, modal reasoning focused on consequences of act for actor or emotional/physical consequences to the victim	Simple conventions and directives: ask, say 'please,' give command
Level 3	Person described as unique individual with focus on global dispositions, general behavior, roles, and details of acquaintanceship	Consistent rating of moral violations as more serious than convention violations; and, modal reasoning focused on consequences of the act for the actor	Reciprocal conventions implying some understanding of reciprocity of meeting needs: taking turns, sharing, trading, offering something for compliance
Level 4	More differentiated and dispositional statements referring to psychological aspects of the person	Consistent rating of moral violations as more serious than convention ones; and, modal reasoning focused on consequences to victim, or social standards, or intrinsic principles	Indirect strategies: waiting, ignoring, tricking, finangling, inducing feelings, planning for future

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Multiple Regression Analyses

Social Conflict and Social-Cognition, Age, and Sex Predictors (N = 96)

Predictors	Conflict variables: Issues				Tactics								Outcome		Rate	
	Object control		Person control		Verbal aggression		Physical aggression		Commands		Requests		Wins		Rate of conflicts	
	MR	R^2	MR	R^2	MR	R^2	MR	R^2	MR	R^2	MR	R^2	MR	R^2	MR	R^2
Social Cognitive																
Person modal	.37***	.14*	.38***	.14*	.17	.03	.23*	.05*	.08	.01	.12	.02	.07	.00	.14	.02
Rules modal	.37***	.14	.38***	.15	.27*	.07*	.24	.06	.14	.02	.13	.02	.25*	.06*	.15	.02
Conflict modal	.39**	.14	.40***	.16	.27	.07	.24	.06	.15	.02	.13	.02	.26	.07	.15	.02
Person variance	.39**	.15	.41**	.17	.29	.09	.29	.08	.19	.04	.13	.02	.26	.07	.16	.03
Rules variance	.41**	.16	.41**	.17	.32	.10	.31	.10	.23	.05	.13	.02	.37*	.14**	.16	.03
Conflict variance	.41**	.17	.42**	.18	.32	.10	.31	.10	.27	.07	.19	.04	.37*	.14	.20	.04
Age	41*	.17	.42**	.18	.35	.12	.33	.11	.27	.07	.27	.07	.38	.14	.27	.07
Gender	47**	.22*	.51***	.26**	.41*	.17*	.53***	.28**	.28	.08	.28	.08	.39	.15	.42*	.18*

*p < .05 F value of MR and/or increase in R^2

**p < .01 F value of MR and/or increase in R^2

***p < .001 F value of MR

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APPENDIX

Illustrative conflicts between children:

Preschool children

Jane and Harry playing near clothing rack. Harry says, "I'm a pirate; I'm gonna marry you." Jane hits her hand against the bookcase and says, "You have to be a prince; if I'm a queen, you have to be a prince." Harry says, "No, I'm a pirate." Jane says, "Then I'm going, I'm not going to marry you." (Houseman, 1972, p. 165)

Children playing on climber. Pam is talking. Marie looks up at Pam, points her finger and says, "Shut up, Pam!" Pam says, "No." Marie says, "Shut up, Pam." Pam: "No." Marie leaves the climber, walks around toward Pam threateningly. Marie looks over her shoulder as teacher walks up. Marie returns to her side of the climber. (Houseman, 1972, p. 170)

Jason and Ted working puzzles. Jason finishes his puzzle and says, "Look, Ted, now I can help you." He turns toward Ted. Ted surrounds his puzzle with his arms, saying, "No, don't help me. I can do this." After a few minutes Jason stands, leans over, and says, "No not right there, put that over there." He pushes a puzzle piece on Ted's puzzle. Ted picks up a piece from the table and says, "Don't help me," trying to take the piece from Jason's hand. Jason pulls his hand back. Ted stands up and says, "Don't help me," louder than before. Jason still has the piece and says, "I'll put it right there." He places the piece in the puzzle. Ted: "Don't help me!" He is pulling Jason's hand away. Under his breath he says, "I'll help myself," and puts a piece in the puzzle. Jason says, "That don't go there." Ted turns the puzzle piece. Jason points and says, "This one go there." Ted keeps working; sits back down. (Houseman, 1972, p. 167)

A: "That's mine." (Approaches partner B who has started to play with truck.) B: "This is not. No." (Moves truck.) A: "It's mine." (Stands, looking down at partner and truck.) B: "Well, I'm using it. I'm using it." A: "Could I take it home?" B: "No, it's the school's." A: "Yes, I am take it home." B: "You don't have a house, you live here." A: "No, I live at home, Lake Charles Avenue." B: "Well, I'm using that. I'm using it." A: "Could I take that home?" B: "Yes, okay." (But doesn't relinquish the truck.) A: "Could I take that home?" (Speaks more softly than before.) B: "Okay, but/but/but I'm using it. (Turns away from A) I'll give it to you when you're gonna go." (Continues to play with truck.) (A moves away from B.) (Garvey, 1984, p. 128, with references to A and B added.)

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Six- and seven-year-olds[1]

Amy: "No! (Puts her hand over blocks) You can't build to this." Julie: (Puts block on pile and looks at Amy) Amy: (Takes block off) "No, you can't build to that." Julie: "Yes you can." Amy: (Puts her own blocks on the pile) "No, you can't." Julie: "Uh huh." (Meaning yes you can) (Picks up block) Amy: "Wait!" Julie: "No!" (Puts block on pile) (Pile falls over and they both laugh and play together.)

Luke: (Threatening motion toward Bobby to throw playdough at him) Bobby: (No response) Luke: (Shakes arm in air threateningly) Bobby: "I'm just not gonna pay attention." Luke: (Gestures threateningly again) Bobby: (No response) Luke: (Gestures threateningly again) Bobby: (No response) Luke: (Throws playdough at Bobby) "Watch it, dum-dum." Bobby: (Flinches slightly) Luke: (Picks up playdough from floor and throws it at Bobby and hits him) Bobby: (Picks up playdough from floor under table and threatens to throw it at Luke) Luke: (Moves out of area) Bobby: (Throws playdough at Luke and crawls under the table) Luke: (Returns to area with playdough and throws it at Bobby and hits him) (Adult intervenes)

Alice: "C'mon. Let's play some more." Jane: "Uh uh (Meaning no) I don't want to." (Gets up on knees) Alice: (Looks up at her) "Please?" Jane: "No." (Sits up) Alice: "Let's finish this for me. Then...I won't play with you any more." Jane: "Nope." (Picking up game pieces) Alice: "Please?" Jane: (No response) Alice: "Please will you?" (Picking up pieces) Jane: (Looks at Alice) "I don't want to." Alice: "Please?" Jane: (No response) (Repeated two more times) Alice: (Puts her hand under Jane's chin, leans forward) "Please?" Jane: "Uh huh" (Meaning no) (Sits back) Alice: "Why not?" Jane: "I don't wanna play." Alice: "Why not?" Jane: (Laughs) "I don't want to." (Alice gives up; both put the game away.)

Julie: (Leans toward Kim) "Tell her it's almost time when we're supposed to go home. Tell her it's almost time." Kim: (Shakes head "No") "You ask her. I'm not..." Julie: "Come on." Kim: "Uh huh" (Meaning no) (Continue their play)

(Girls simultaneously pick up doll from floor.) Stephanie: "Wait! I wanna put them on. (Pulls doll) Julie: (Tugs) "Let me put them on." Stephanie: (Pulls doll) Julie: (Tugs) "No! I want to show you something." Stephanie: (Pulls doll) "I wanna see it." Julie: (Tugs) Stephanie: "You're gonna pull the head off!" (Pulls) Julie: (Tugs) "Stephanie!" Stephanie: (Pulls doll away from Julie) "Ha ha" (Mockingly) Julie: (Grabs doll in Stephanie's hand) Stephanie: "Wait, Julie!" (Tug) "Julie, let me show you something." Julie: (Grabs with other hand) Stephanie: "Wait!" Julie: (Lets go of doll and walks away)

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John: "I'm on your team, Luke," Luke: "No, you're not." John: "Yes...I ...my guy is..." Luke: "Uh uh (Meaning no) You're not playing with us." John: "I know I am too." Luke: "So you can't play. No, you're not." John: (No response) Luke: "But you're not playing." John: "Yes I am!" Luke: "Uh huh (Meaning no) Don't talk." (John leaves area; doesn't play with Luke.)

[1]Shantz, D. W., & Shantz, C. U. (1982). Verbatim observational records from videotapes of free play.

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